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VISION 2020: THE SUSTAINABLE REGION

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VISION 2020

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The Sustainable Region

The Chairman's Task Force on Sustainable Development
The Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth

Shaping The Future of Hamilton-Wentworth

The Regional Chairman's Task Force on Sustainable Development

In 1989, it was recognized that mechanisms were needed to better coordinate budget decisions with Regional Government policy goals and objectives. At that time, the Chief Administrative Officer directed the Planning and Development Department to identify a set of criteria for evaluating proposals coming forward for budget approval. Research indicated that a philosophy which incorporated the many concerns, issues and trends facing the community would provide that framework. *Sustainable development*, with its emphasis on environmental, social and economic issues, and on development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, provided such a focus.

In the Spring of 1990, Regional Council established the Regional Chairman's Task Force on Sustainable Development. Composed of three regional councillors and fifteen citizen members, the Task Force was given a mandate to complete six tasks:

1. To develop a precise definition of sustainable development for Hamilton-Wentworth that will be used by the Task Force in developing a vision for the Region;

2. To develop a vision to guide future development in Hamilton-Wentworth based on the principles of sustainable development;

3. To establish a public outreach programme to increase awareness of the concept of sustainable development and to act as a vehicle for feedback on potential goals, objectives and policies for the Region;

4. To provide input as to how the concept of sustainable development can be turned into practical applications through Regional initiatives;

5. To demonstrate and articulate in detail, the usefulness of the sustainable development concept, in the review of the Regional Official Plan, the Region's Economic Strategy and possibly other Regional strategies; and

6. To provide direction to staff and the Economic Development and Planning Committee who will be using the concept in the review of the Economic Strategy and the Official Plan.

With the preparation of Vision 2020, the Task Force has developed a definition of sustainable development, established a public outreach programme, and created a vision to guide future development. Work has already started on the remaining three tasks and will be completed with the presentation of an implementation strategy to Regional Council in December, 1992.

Vision 2020

Forward

Sustainable Development is positive change which does not undermine the environment or social systems on which we depend. It requires a coordinated approach to planning and policy making that involves public participation. Its success depends upon widespread understanding of the critical relationship between people and their environment and the will to make necessary changes. Principles of sustainable development encompass the following:

- *fulment of human needs for peace, clean air and water, food, shelter, education, and useful and satisfying employment;*
- *maintenance of ecological integrity through careful stewardship, rehabilitation, reduction in wastes and protection of diverse and important natural species and systems;*
- *provision for self-determination through public involvement in the definition and development of local solutions to environmental and development problems; and,*
- *achievement of equity with the fairest possible sharing of limited resources among contemporaries and between our generation and that of our descendants.*

An Overview

These basic values underlie Vision 2020. The vision expresses ideas contributed by citizens through several phases of community participation. It is the beginning of an ongoing process leading to a sustainable region.

In the year 2020, Hamilton-Wentworth supports a population consistent with the carrying capacity of the region. People live in a region made up of compact urban core areas, surrounded by a rural landscape that includes productive family farms, hamlets and a continuous network of natural areas.

We are an environmentally conscious community where the existence of all living things is cherished and where all can breathe fresh air, swim in clean streams and lakes and have ample opportunity to observe and experience the wonders of the natural world.

We are an economically, socially and culturally diverse community that encourages opportunities for individuals, reduces inequities and ensures full participation for all in community life.

What is Vision 2020?

VISION 2020 - THE SUSTAINABLE REGION, is a presentation of the ideas and views contributed by the people of Hamilton-Wentworth through an extensive public participation programme, involving over 400 individuals and 50 community groups and organizations. The vision describes, in broad terms, the type of community Hamilton-Wentworth could be in the year 2020, if our actions follow the principles of sustainable development. The vision is an image of a better community, a goal toward which we can strive.

How will Vision 2020 be used?

On June 16, 1992 Regional Council adopted the following recommendation:

That Vision 2020, as recommended by the Regional Chairman's Task Force on Sustainable Development, be adopted as the basis for Regional decision-making in Hamilton-Wentworth, including such policy documents as the Hamilton-Wentworth Official Plan, the Regional Economic Strategy, and the capital budget process.

By adopting Vision 2020, Regional Council has made a commitment to a particular future. Vision 2020 will now serve as a guide to policy creation and decision-making and operate as a framework to assist Regional Council make future decisions. In particular, the vision will guide three major regional government activities.

- *a review of the Regional Official Plan (determines how land is used and developed);*
- *the preparation of the Economic Strategy (aimed at improving the economic life of Hamilton-Wentworth); and*
- *budgeting (how our tax dollars should be spent).*

Vision 2020 is at foremost a challenge to government, citizens, business, and community groups to think about how their actions can move our community towards a more sustainable future. It provides a tool against which to measure our actions and to ask of every activity, project or initiative:

"will this bring our community closer to the sustainable future stated in Vision 2020?".

We are a caring community that gives opportunity and support to all its members, including children, the aged, people with disabilities, immigrants and refugees. People live longer in good health.

Finally, we are a vibrant, vigourous community which builds on existing strengths and attracts wealth producing businesses that work in partnership with government and the community to create a diverse, sustainable economy. Economic growth incorporates non-polluting, energy efficient and environmentally friendly businesses, including traditional manufacturing industries that have been supported and helped to become environmentally sustainable. Business, government, labour and the community have great capacity for innovation in response to global change.

The Landscape

The health and beauty of the countryside and townscape is a source of great civic pride. A protected system of natural areas threads throughout the region, preserving and improving our natural heritage. This system of natural areas and connecting corridors allows wildlife to migrate, enhancing their chances of reproducing and finding food and shelter. A recreational greenway gives residents access to this system of natural areas, in ways that do not threaten ecological processes. Recreation and the needs of wildlife for a protected habitat co-exist.

As a community, we cherish a clean, healthy environment and work to prevent ecological degradation. Waste-reduction, energy-efficiency and respect for ecological systems characterize all aspects of community life and decision making, including government, business and industry. Citizens abide by environmental laws and regulations and help educate each other on ways of living in harmony with the natural world. We are a model for other communities in the way in which we integrate short-term economic benefits, long-term environmental and social costs, and indirect economic costs in our evaluation of public and private initiatives.

Our Communities

Urban areas are laid out, and individual buildings designed and located, in ways that maintain community character, respect our cultural and natural heritage, and satisfy people's needs and desires. Urban development occurs within firm boundaries. Green corridors bring nature into the city, giving people easy and convenient access to the open countryside, natural areas and continuous public open space along the bayshore and lakeshore. Our neighbourhoods are models of energy-efficiency, waste-reduction and respect for nature. Human needs for space, privacy, safety, and aesthetic appeal are fulfilled.

In the year 2020, we know our neighbours. We live in communities and neighbourhoods together with people of all ages and walks of life. Different kinds of activities and land uses are mixed closely together, so that we can walk to meet our daily needs for work, recreation and other services. Each neighbourhood has a central gathering place where essential services such as shopping, health care, education and recreation are clustered around an attractive, car-free common open space. This gives everyone an opportunity to participate in all aspects of community life. Each neighbourhood has a full range of housing types and prices allowing people to live in their communities throughout their lives. This is true also for former suburban industrial-business parks, which have been re-developed with homes and other activities mixed in with the workplace.

Hamilton-Wentworth is a warm and friendly place where people actively care for their community and are concerned for one another's welfare. The streets and public areas are safe at all times. Neighbourhoods have strong local identity. Residents actively participate in community life, to a large extent, controlling the pace and design of change. The decision-making process is easily understood and open to involvement by all. Politicians and public employees take the actions needed to achieve long-term community plans.

Getting Around

An integrated public transportation system serves the entire region in an affordable, efficient, and accessible way. Clean forms of transportation predominate. Public streets are designed and managed (including signals and regulations) to accommodate comfortably and safely, public transit, cyclists, pedestrians and automobiles as complementary forms of transportation. The integrated transportation system gives access to all basic needs. Public transit provides all citizens with easy access to activity areas, as well as to neighbouring communities and cities via convenient and frequent inter-urban transit. Most people can walk or cycle to work because jobs and housing are near one another. Major roads have minimal noise and pollution impacts on adjacent lands, and follow routes that cause little damage to the natural and human environment.

Quality of Life

In the year 2020, disease and disability are being progressively reduced. All of us achieve our full potential in a safe, non-violent environment. Everyone has adequate food, shelter, income and education. Everyone has a valued role to play in family, work and community. We have access to affordable and appropriate health care, regardless of geography, income, age, gender, or cultural background. Cultural institutions and activities are recognized and supported for their contribution to community life and economic health. Cultural institutions reflect our historical development and the contributions of our diverse population.

All of us take responsibility for our health, citizenship and public decision-making. As citizens, we are active participants in cooperative, region-wide community planning. Government is coordinated, efficient and easily accessible. A well-educated, literate population is seen as a total community responsibility. Schools are leaders in effective learning and excellence in teaching. Lifelong learning is valued and supported across the community. All citizens are knowledgeable about sustainable development and quality of life issues. Our cultural institutions and groups advocate values consistent with environmental sustainability. Educational institutions instill sustainable values and citizens pursue sustainable lifestyles.

Livelihood

A stable, flexible economy is achieved through the effective use and development of all community resources. This means not only land, capital equipment, and community services, but the continued improvement and retention of a skilled workforce. Economic strategies, set through a cooperative process involving citizens, business, government, education and labour, include effective job-training and re-training programmes. All people can find employment opportunities in the region.

The region is home to numerous firms that carry out research and development and manufacture in sustainable economic sectors. Successful companies are characterized by high production quality and worker productivity, and innovative employment practices such as on-site daycare, jobsharing, work-at-home arrangements, and cooperative, community-based job creation. These companies provide a solid tax base for the region. Business and industry actively participate with government in advanced skill training programmes, including programmes designed to enhance employment accessibility for people with disabilities. Firms are at the forefront of energy efficiency; and pollution control and prevention; and material re-use and recycling.

Hamilton-Wentworth is now home to a whole new economic sector based on the natural resources of the region. Hamilton Harbour is a base for nature-oriented tourism and recreation, that includes the Niagara Escarpment, waterfalls and Carolinian forest areas of the region. The harbour is a vibrant centrepiece for the community and is accessible, clean, and humming with diversity. Recreation co-exists with use of the harbour as an essential marine transportation link.

Agriculture, now considered a strategic community resource, is a vibrant part of the regional economy, which makes a valued contribution to our overall quality of life. The farming community is economically viable and environmentally sensitive, capable of supporting family farming operations that are competitive internationally. The farming community is in harmony with neighbouring urban areas using clean, organic urban waste to enhance the soil. Prime agricultural land is recognized by all citizens as irreplaceable and strong policies and programs ensure its continued use for food production. Moreover, agricultural soils are continuously improved through the widespread use of sustainable farm practices. Vacation farming ensures an enhanced profile for local agriculture.

For further information, please contact

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